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Abstract

An apparatus and method are provided for automatically packaging non-flowing products into pouches. The non-flowing products are products such as tuna fish, chicken, bacon and other products which neither flow easily nor behave like fluids. The non-flowing product is compressively formed into a product cake in a forming chamber wherein one surface of the forming chamber is the end wall of a movable metering shoe. The formed product cake is thereafter ejected from the forming chamber causing the movable metering shoe to drive the formed product cake downwardly into a suspended and unsealed pouch. In one embodiment of the invention, a multi-position turret is utilized to accomplish higher packaging rates. Two or more work stations are positioned around the rotating turret, one work station feeding product into forming chambers carried by the turret and a second work station ejecting the formed cakes into suspended pouches. A second embodiment of the invention utilizes a single fixed forming chamber positioned above a suspended pouch. The second embodiment utilizes fewer moving parts and has a lower packaging rate.